

## **Chapter 10 WSDOT Travel Rules and Procedures**



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### **Quick Reference Guide**

#### **Overview**

This Quick Reference Guide is a high level summary of the travel rules and procedures. For further details refer to the travel chapter section referenced.

#### **Your Travel Coordinator**

To obtain a basic understanding of your organization's travel processing requirements, contact your organization's assigned Travel Coordinator. Ask your supervisor for their name and phone number.

This understanding will aid you in coordinating your trip arrangements (airline, rental car, lodging, etc.). Your Travel Coordinator also has access to department experts on specific travel questions and concerns.

#### **Official State Business**

Official travel to carry out the mission and functions of the department is necessary and important. Travel is regulated by State and Federal laws, Office of Financial Management regulations, and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

#### **Equitable Treatment**

All travelers in like travel circumstances will receive the same treatment.

#### **Types of Travel**

There are three main types of travel:

- In-state
- Out-of-state
- Out-of-country



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### **Prior Authorization**

The traveler is responsible for obtaining authorization to travel from the appropriate authority prior to departing on the trip and for completing the appropriate travel forms if required. Questions should be referred to the organization travel coordinator. Refer to Subsection 10-2.10 for additional information.

### **Authorization Criteria**

The approving authority applies the following criteria:

First, it must be demonstrated that the travel option being requested is the most economical to the department. A memo from the approving authority which compares travel options, or includes a cost benefit analysis, may be used for this purpose.

Second, consideration is given to that which is the most advantageous to any individual with special circumstances. OFM has defined that compliance with the Americans with Disability Act is advantageous to the state. Refer to Subsection 10-2.3 for additional information.

### **Travel Status**

When authorization to travel is obtained and the traveler leaves on the trip, he/she is considered to be in travel status. This means you are away from both your official station and official residence. Normally this is outside the town, city, or vicinity limits of where you work and live.

For example, if you live in town or city 'A' and work in town or city 'B' and you are outside the limits of both these locations, then you are in travel status.

Being in travel status does not always mean you are entitled to receive per diem. To qualify for reimbursement other criteria must be applied. However, you must first be in travel status before you can apply the other travel principles.

Before estimated travel costs can be determined, the traveler must identify their assigned work shift and then apply the remaining travel principles. This includes the three hour rule which determines if the traveler is reimbursed for meals. Refer to Subsection 10-2.5 for additional information.

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### **Work Shift**

A “work shift” means the hours you are normally scheduled to perform your job functions. Often this is based on a 40 hour work week. Some alternate work schedules are based on working 80 to 88 hours over a two week period.

The work shift provides the basis for determining eligible meal (subsistence) entitlements as described below.

### **Per Diem Rates**

Per Diem Rates are the maximum allowable amounts the department can reimburse you for lodging (before taxes), and for meals. The per diem rates are published by OFM, and based on the Federal per diem rates.

There are two cost rates used for Per Diem Rates: Non-High Cost, and High Cost. This information is available on line through an internet link on the Olympia Service Center's Accounting Services Web Site:

- [http://wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/FASC/Accounting/Accounting\\_Systems/travel.htm](http://wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/FASC/Accounting/Accounting_Systems/travel.htm)

Employees are expected to NOT purposely delay their departure or return in order to qualify for unnecessary meal costs. Refer to Appendix D for additional information.

### **Meals**

The amount you will be reimbursed for meals while traveling is called an “entitlement”. This is a set amount you receive for each meal you are entitled to while in travel status after meeting specific criteria:

- The Three (3) Hour Rule (refer to Subsection 10-3.3 for additional information) is used to determine whether you are entitled to meal reimbursement.
- You are not entitled to reimbursement for meals at or between your official station and/or official residence.
- Meal times are determined using a department meal period schedule. Meal periods are considered to be at the same time each day within your regular scheduled work shift. For non-regular scheduled work days the meal period is considered to be the same time as your regular work shift.



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### **Meals (continued)**

Meal entitlements reimbursed will not exceed the state transportation allowance rate in effect at the time of travel. Meal entitlements may be taxable depending on whether the travel is non-overnight, same day (taxable), or overnight (non-taxable). Refer to 10-3 for additional information.

### **Lodging**

The amount you will be reimbursed for lodging expenses is not to exceed the state rate in effect at the time of travel. The following criteria affects your reimbursement:

#### **Fifty Mile Rule**

To be eligible for lodging reimbursement, your temporary duty station (travel destination) must be more than 50 miles from both your official station and your residence, using the most direct route. The fifty mile rule is used to determine whether lodging will be part of your travel plans. Refer to 10-4.4 for additional information.

#### **Exceptions to 50 Mile Rule**

OFM has published three exceptions to the 50 Mile rule:

- The official state business requires the traveler to arrive early in the morning or late at night for back to back events. The amount of time between close of business on the first day and the start of business on the second day must be 11 hours (3 hours personal time and 8 hours of sleep) or less.
- The health and safety of the traveler will be compromised.
- It is more economical to the state.

An additional exception: The Secretary of Transportation may determine that, during an emergency situation, employees performing critical department functions must remain at their work stations, and are therefore eligible for lodging. Refer to Subsection 10-2.7 for additional information.

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### **Lodging (continued)**

#### **Exceptions to Maximum Lodging Rates (also known as the 150% Rule)**

There are six exceptions to the maximum lodging rates. Refer to Subsection 10-4.4, and Appendix Q, *Travel Expense Reimbursement Checklist*, for additional information on these exceptions.

#### **Exception for Very Unusual Conditions (also known as the Actual Cost Exception)**

Under certain conditions you can obtain approval for reimbursement of actual lodging expenses in excess of the 150% rule. When this exception is used you must:

- Obtain written approval from the approving authority by providing a brief explanation why the exception is necessary.
- Select the most economical room rate available under the circumstances.
- Include with your request for travel reimbursement a brief explanation, and signed approval, of the exception.

Refer to Subsection 10-4.5 for additional information on this exception.

#### **Use of Privately Owned Vehicle (POV)**

When you use your privately owned vehicle for state travel, you can be reimbursed based at the state rate per mile in effect at the time of travel.

The POV mileage rate is available on line through an internet link on the Olympia Service Center's Accounting Services Web Site:

- [http://wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/FASC/Accounting/Accounting\\_Systems/travel.htm](http://wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/FASC/Accounting/Accounting_Systems/travel.htm)



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### **Use of Privately Owned Vehicle (continued)**

You must meet specific criteria to be reimbursed for mileage on your privately owned vehicle:

- If you base your mileage on “vicinity”, you need to record your odometer readings at the start and end of your trip.
  - Odometer readings must be recorded on the Travel Expense Voucher.
  - You must record specifics about where you are going and what the purpose is under “Purpose of Trip” on the Travel Expense Voucher.
- If you base your mileage on “point-to-point”, note this fact on the Travel Expense Voucher.

Refer to Subsection 10-5.2 for additional information.

### **Miscellaneous Expenses**

Miscellaneous travel expenses essential to the transaction of official state business may be reimbursable. You are responsible for understanding the types of expenses eligible for reimbursement and the criteria that must be met before reimbursement. Attach receipts when applicable to the Travel Expense Voucher.

An example: In general, taxi fares and parking are reimbursable when incurred to accomplish the business objective. These same expenses are not reimbursable if incurred for entertainment purposes while you are in travel status.

Refer to Subsection 10-6.2 for additional information.

### **Checklist**

For the basics on Travel Expense Voucher preparation, and additional travel information and forms, refer to Appendix Q, the Travel Expense Reimbursement Checklist.



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### **Travel Expense Voucher Tips**

Review this list to help avoid common mistakes on the Travel Expense Voucher:

- Identify yourself.
- List the business purpose and clearly identify the specifics about where you are going, for what purpose, and any unusual circumstances or exceptions.
- Make sure totals are correct.
- Make sure account coding is correct.
- Obtain your supervisor's approval.
- Work with your Travel Coordinator to ensure compliance with travel rules.

End.



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